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WHAT DO STUDENTS KNOW ABOUT AMERICAN GOVERNMENT, BEFORE TAKING COLLEGE COURSES IN POLITICAL SCIENCE?

A REPORT TO THE SECTION ON INSTRUCTION IN POLITICAL SCIENCE.

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One day in March, 1903, a junior in the College of Engineering came to me to make up an entrance condition which, on account of an oversight, still stood against him on the books of the University. Under the rules regulating entrance, he was permitted to offer, among other things, a semester's work in American Government. This he chose to do. A few inquiries directed to the young man brought out the fact that he had once had a short high school course in what we still designate by that inane term "Civics," the worst faded out word in our educational terminology. Aside from this brief course of instruction, his information regarding American Government had been gleaned from reading one or two of the most elementary text-books on the subject, from the dailies, from an occasional article in some magazine, from common conversation and from participation in two elections.

This being the situation the following five simple questions were jotted down and submitted to him as a test:

- I. Explain how members of Congress are chosen and state what you know about their terms, qualifications and compensation.
- II. Write a brief account of the federal courts. What does the Constitution provide in regard to the establishment of a system of United States courts?
- III. Describe clearly the process by which the Constitution of the United States may be amended. How may it be interpreted?

IV. Outline the government of a county in your state.

V. What is meant by the New England plan of township government?

These he answered in somewhat over an hour's diligent work. The results were very different from what might fairly be expected, so radically different, that the case set me to thinking. Gradually these pedagogical problems presented themselves: How much really definite and communicable information does the average mind contain on a given subject? Is the stuff put down on paper at a moment's warning in an hour's sitting a fair sample of what the person knows about the questions asked? Is it safe to assume, in giving instruction to beginners in Political Science in our colleges, that they are familiar with the rudiments of our governmental and party organization?

Questions like these had often arisen before in connection with the work of instruction and the planning of courses. For instance, in mapping out the first courses in Political Science there seemed to be a common impression that the American college boy above the sophomore year knows the essentials of our federal, state and local governments and is familiar with the current press and periodical discussions on political questions. On that assumption such courses as the Theory of the State, Comparative Government, Municipal Administration and Politics and Administration were offered. Why courses on topics of this kind were considered very difficult by the average upper classman was a mystery until the reading of that examination paper. That paper indicated that the beginner in political science brings to his work only a very meager equipment. How inadequate and utterly untrustworthy his information about his country's government may be in an individual case, the following answers to the three questions on the federal government will illustrate:

I. In choosing members of Congress, each state elects a certain number of Senators and Representatives according to number of inhabitants. The state is divided into congressional districts, and each district elects its mem-

bers by popular vote. They are allowed a certain amount per mile to cover traveling expenses, and receive \$5 per day while Congress is in session. He must be a citizen of the United States who has privilege of voting and a resident of the country a certain length of time, and also a resident of the district which he represents for a given length of time. The state determines the qualifications of voters. Each house is its own judge as to whether its members should take their seats. A recent example is trouble about Utah Senator. Senator's term is six years; one-third elected every two years. Representatives elected every two years.

- II. The Supreme Court has to deal with affairs which involve the Federal Government, and settles difficulties between states. It is the final court to which one can appeal for trial when the dispute is caused by interpreting the law.
- III. The bill for amendment is first introduced and read in the House; it is then referred to a committee. If they approve of it, it is again taken before the House, discussed, and voted upon, or the committee may revise it before presenting it to the House. If it passes, it is then taken to the Senate. If it passes the Senate, it only remains for the President to sign it before becoming a law. If the President refuses to sign it, it can become a law provided it passes both houses by a two-thirds majority. The Supreme Court interprets the laws.

Apparently this young man was not aware of the fundamental fact that two senators are elected at large in each state by the state legislature irrespective of area or population. His conception of our judiciary was certainly not very complete nor very accurate. In a subsequent conversation he stoutly maintained that the Supreme Court is the only national court we have and that its function is to decide all "disputes caused by interpreting the law." By "law" he meant state and federal statutes, and by "interpreting" he meant construing the meaning of a statutory provision. It also became clear that he was wholly unaware of the distinction between American constitutional law and statute law

and the peculiar function of our courts in guarding the constitution against infringements. His statement that Congress can amend the constitution by bill seems astonishing. There is a grave suspicion in my mind that to him amending a law and amending the constitution were one and the same thing. Further investigations seem to indicate that such a suspicion was nearer the truth than we like to admit. They certainly show that the want of understanding of our judiciary and the process of amending the constitution shown in this case is very common.

This examination paper surely opens up an interesting line of inquiry. Here is a young man 24 years of age, of New England parentage, who has passed through a system of graded schools, a good average high school in a thriving western town and reached the junior year in a high grade technical school, who has read a daily paper for several years, voted in two elections and who apparently is unable to write an intelligent account explaining the simplest rudiments of his country's government. Whatever the facts might indicate in this particular case, the questions it raised seemed to warrant an investigation.

The first point to determine was plainly, have we here an exceptional case or is it fairly typical? In order to satisfy myself beyond a doubt on that question, the identical test was given to a class of 28 seniors in the College of Engineering. These students were all graduates of high schools, thoroughly tested by a rigid training in the rather severe engineering courses but who had taken none of the college courses in the social sciences. In fact the test was given to them on the day they presented themselves for their required work in Politics and Economics, a two-hour course running through the senior year.

The results of this test entirely confirmed the previous inferences. They showed that the original case was remarkably typical. The test was repeated to a similar group of students in 1905 with almost precisely the same results.

Under the present elective system it is to be expected that those high school boys who look forward to an engineering

career will omit courses in the social science group and elect heavily in the physical science and mathematical groups. Therefore we should expect the least training in problems of government among this particular group of students. But there were indications that many students in the academic courses had likewise very generally omitted courses on history and government. Of course, under our present system of free election, beyond a certain fixed minimum, it is perfectly possible to go through the grades, the high school, and get a college degree without necessarily having taken a single course in either American History or American Government. The report of the United States commissioner of education for 1902 shows that from 15 to 30 per cent. of our students are taking work in American Government in the secondary schools of our various states.

This being true it seemed advisable to offer in the University an elementary course on American Government. The course was opened to sophomores and upper classmen. It became apparent at once that such instruction was meeting the needs of a large number, over one hundred elected it last year, the second time it was offered. This year there are 175 taking that work.

This class afforded an excellent opportunity for further observation and inquiry among an entirely different group of students, those pursuing the academic courses. This experience demonstrated clearly that such expressions as: majority, plurality, election at large, pure democracy, representative democracy, centralization, decentralization, grand jury, petit jury, common law, statute law were so many words without any definite meaning. The most elementary features of our federal system, the composition of our legislatures, their organization and the simplest rules of procedure, our system of courts, the method of making nominations and electing men to office, all required careful explanation and study. In fact the subject seemed to be brand new to a large number, among them a considerable proportion of juniors and seniors.

Satisfied that such was the local situation, it seemed very desirable to determine whether this deficiency in political edu-

cation was confined to one state or whether it was true of the whole country. Accordingly in September, 1905, a plan was formed for having the identical test given in a number of typical American universities under as nearly the same conditions as possible. The directions were to give the test to two distinct groups of students as far as possible, to seniors in the courses in engineering, and to sophomores, juniors and seniors in the academic courses who had taken no college courses in Political Science or American History. No previous notice was to be given of the examination and an hour was to be allowed for the work. The students were to understand the purpose of the investigation and be urged to answer the questions conscientiously.

In addition to the five questions put to the original group, it was found very instructive to ascertain the following facts:

- I. Age at nearest birthday.
- II. Nationality.
- III. Where prepared for college, giving name of the school.
- IV. Time given to American Government in the grades, in the preparatory school.
- V. Time given to American History in the grades, in the preparatory school.

The questions were sent to 13 institutions; of these 10 gave the test and sent in their papers. Adding to them the papers collected here, there were in all 10 sets from academic students and five from engineering students. The papers were all read and graded on a scale of 100. Selecting the papers from the academic students of ten universities we get the following figures:

| No. of students. | Av. age. | I. Av. %. | II. Av. %. | III. Av. %. | IV. Av. %. | V. Av. %. | Total. Av. %. |
|------------------|----------|--------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|
| 238 | 20.6 | 12.4 | 7.2 | 5.6 | 9.5 | 6.5 | 41.3 |

In the following tables the total points scored by each institution are given and the papers are arranged into two groups:

FOUR EASTERN UNIVERSITIES.

| No. of students. | Av. age. | I. | II. | III. | IV. | V. | Total. | Av. |
|------------------|----------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|--------|-----|
| 36 | 21 | 282 | 111 | 63 | 168 | 274 | 898 | 25 |
| *13 | — | 133 | 51 | 25 | 74 | 38 | 321 | 25 |
| 23 | 19 | 202 | 109 | 110 | 136 | 72 | 629 | 27 |
| 25 | 21 | 342 | 156 | 149 | 190 | 214 | 1051 | 42 |
| Total 97 | Av. 20.4 | 9.8 | 4.4 | 3.6 | 5.8 | 6.1 | 29.8 | |
| — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | |

* Freshmen.

SIX MIDDLE-WESTERN UNIVERSITIES.

| No. of students. | Av. age. | I. | II. | III. | IV. | V. | Total. | Av. |
|------------------|----------|------|-----|------|------|-----|--------|-----|
| 43 | 20 | 633 | 375 | 198 | 374 | 145 | 1725 | 40 |
| 18 | 20 | 227 | 113 | 29 | 204 | 31 | 604 | 33 |
| 9 | 22 | 134 | 64 | 45 | 76 | 93 | 412 | 46 |
| 24 | 20 | 334 | 213 | 235 | 320 | 219 | 1321 | 55 |
| 31 | 21 | 444 | 358 | 300 | 433 | 251 | 1786 | 57 |
| 16 | 19 | 235 | 207 | 174 | 280 | 207 | 1103 | 69 |
| — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | |
| Total 141 | Av. 20.8 | 14.2 | 9.3 | 6.9 | 11.9 | 6.7 | 49.2 | |

In order to show the range of marks the five highest and five lowest were selected from each institution and averaged with the following results:

FOUR EASTERN UNIVERSITIES.

| No. of students. | <i>Five highest.</i> | | <i>Five lowest.</i> | |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | Av. age. | Av. standing. | Av. age. | Av. standing. |
| 36 | 20.6 | 67.2 | 20.6 | 0.4 |
| *13 | — | 47.4 | — | 6.5 |
| 23 | 20.4 | 61.8 | 18.2 | 1.4 |
| 25 | 21.8 | 73.8 | 20.0 | 21.0 |

* Freshmen.

FIVE MIDDLE WESTERN UNIVERSITIES.

| No. of students. | <i>Five highest.</i> | | <i>Five lowest.</i> | |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | Av. age. | Av. standing. | Av. age. | Av. standing. |
| 43 | 21.6 | 75.2 | 19.6 | 10.6 |
| 18 | 25.8 | 66.6 | 20.6 | 3.2 |
| 24 | 19.8 | 79.8 | 20.4 | 23.8 |
| 31 | 20.8 | 89.4 | 22.0 | 15.8 |
| 16 | 19.8 | 84.4 | 20.0 | 48.2 |

9—Omitted on account of the small number.

The results obtained from four classes of engineering students in three different institutions are shown in the following summary:

| TOTAL POINTS SCORED. | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|--------|------|
| No. of students. | Av. age. | I. | II. | III. | IV. | V. | Total. | Av. |
| 31 | 21.1 | 358 | 146 | 39 | 410 | 58 | 1011 | 32.6 |
| *18 | — | 251 | 78 | 32 | 48 | 23 | 432 | 24.0 |
| 36 | 22.2 | 327 | 153 | 14 | 188 | 5 | 687 | 19.0 |
| 27 | 24.0 | 357 | 193 | 136 | 117 | 57 | 861 | 31.8 |
| Averages. . . . | 22.3 | 11.5 | 5.0 | 1.9 | 6.8 | 1.2 | | 26.7 |

* Freshmen.

The directions were not strictly followed in some institutions. In two cases the test was given to freshmen only, as indicated in the tables. In two institutions some students who had taken college work in either Political Science or American History, or both, took the test. Those who took the History courses only averaged 48 and 46 respectively. Those who had taken courses in Political Science only, or in both, averaged 81 and 80 respectively. The student who made the best mark in the latter group happens to be a young woman. There was not a sufficient number of women students among the 141 in the western group (and of course none at all in the eastern group) to show any particular results, excepting that in no case was the low average due to them. Apparently the practice of the young women in electing courses in the social sciences varies greatly in our co-educational institutions. In some universities only a very few elect in these sciences, while in others they elect quite generally.

The figures given are of course not an *exact* measure of either the accuracy or the comprehensiveness of the answers. It was found impracticable to reduce the marks to an absolute scale, because the great majority of the replies were meager and very inaccurate. The figures must be taken therefore as an estimate of the relative worth of the papers, graded according to what was considered a fairly accurate and a reasonably full

answer. For example, if an answer to the first question showed that the student understood that there were two houses of congress, a Senate and a House of Representatives and that each state had two senators, elected by the legislature, and representatives in proportion to population elected by the voters in congressional districts, a mark of 16 was allowed and four additional for a reasonably correct statement of the facts as to terms, qualifications and compensation. In those cases where "members of congress" was taken to mean "congressmen" in the popular sense and where the election of members to the lower house was accurately stated, a mark of 10 or 12 was given on the theory that the student misread the question and could have stated the facts in regard to the senate with equal accuracy had his attention been called to the omission. In the same way, where in answering the third question the student gave one process of amending the constitution correctly but failed to mention the other alternative, a mark of 15 was granted.

In spite of liberal allowances of this nature, the general level of standings was exceedingly low for the entire group of 350 students. There is, however, a noticeable difference between the eastern and western groups, a difference which any one glancing through the papers would readily notice. It is rather surprising to find the young men in some of our middle-western states giving better accounts of the New England town government than their cousins in some instances in the New England and middle states. This may be accounted for partly by the fact that a larger proportion of the young men in our western universities come from the country and the small towns where they come in more direct contact with rural local government, which in these states is based on the town meeting. It is evident that those boys who have grown up in large cities are generally quite unfamiliar with rural local government. But perhaps the explanation in most cases is to be found in the fact that a larger number of boys in the graded and high schools of the middle-west have studied manuals on our government, which usually give a good account of the New England town meet-

ing, and its influence on the development of rural local government of the western states. At least an analysis of the facts given in regard to the work of the different students in the grades and the preparatory schools on American History and American Government would seem to indicate that.

It was found impossible to determine the relative amount of time each individual had put on the two subjects, because the statements could not be reduced to comparable units. Therefore the figures were compiled so as to indicate how many had taken the subjects and how many had omitted them entirely in their courses below the college. The facts compiled in this way indicate that out of 84 in the eastern group, 17 said that they had taken work in American Government in the grades, and 67 had not. In the preparatory or high school 27 out of 84 said they had taken the subject, while 57 had not. In the western group out of 114 students for whom the facts were at hand, we find that 22 had taken some work on American Government in the grades while 68 had not. In the preparatory or high school 82 had taken it while only 32 had not. The facts in regard to the work in American History seem to be these: eastern group, 26 out of 84 took it in the grades, 58 did not; 48 out of 84 took it in the preparatory, 36 did not; western group, 50 out of 89 had it, 39 had not; in the preparatory 82 out of 114 had it, 32 had not taken it.

There is a vague idea afloat that those communities which have been settled by recent arrivals from Europe and their children are handicapped in managing their government because of the lack of information about our political institutions among this class of American citizens. This idea is hardly tenable, so far as the college boys are concerned. On the contrary when it comes to writing an intelligent account of our government, it is not so much long residence and our forefathers that count as a clear head and systematic training in the subject. At any rate there is no indication that the sons of the colonials tend to crowd up to the top of the column and the sons of the recent arrivals cluster about the foot. It may be an accident but the college group that

counted among its number 4 of colonial stock, 4 of German, 5 of Scandinavian, a Belgian, a Hungarian, a Pole and 13 of mixed Swiss, German, English, Scottish, Irish, Scandinavian and American colonial descent stood first on average for the five best, and second on general averages. In the little group of five best there appeared one of English-Scotch parentage, one of German, one of German-American, one of Swiss-American and one of Norwegian parentage. The hyphenated words in each case mean mixed stocks. It so happens that no colonial American appeared in the list of five highest, but one appeared in the list of five lowest.

On the other hand in the group of students that stood first on general averages there were only two that were not of colonial parentage. In the eastern group that made among the lowest standings there were 30 of pure American stock and only 6 of other parentage. The following table indicates the number of each nationality in each group of students:

| EASTERN UNIVERSITIES. | | | | | WESTERN UNIVERSITIES. | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| American..... | 30 | 17 | 16 | .. | 4 | 19 | 4 | 14 | 29 | 15 |
| German..... | 1 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1 | 4 | .. | .. | .. |
| Mixed..... | 5 | 3 | 2 | .. | 4 | 1 | 13 | 2 | 9 | 2 |
| Jewish..... | .. | 3 | 5 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1 | .. |
| English..... | .. | 2 | .. | .. | .. | 2 | 2 | .. | .. | 1 |
| Canadian..... | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1 | 1 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| Norwegian..... | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 2 | .. | 2 | .. |
| Swedish..... | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 2 | .. | 2 | .. |
| Danish..... | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1 | .. | 1 | .. |
| Belgian..... | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1 | .. | .. | .. |
| Hungarian..... | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1 | .. | .. | .. |
| Polish..... | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1 | .. | .. | .. |
| Not given..... | .. | .. | .. | 13 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |

The 141 students in the middle-western group came from the following states in the numbers indicated:

| | | | |
|----------------|----|--------------------|---|
| Wisconsin..... | 36 | Utah..... | 3 |
| Minnesota..... | 33 | South Dakota..... | 2 |
| Iowa..... | 25 | Oregon..... | 1 |
| Missouri..... | 18 | Massachusetts..... | 1 |
| Illinois..... | 15 | Ohio..... | 1 |
| Michigan..... | 5 | Canada..... | 1 |

The 97 students in the eastern group hailed from the following states in the numbers indicated:

| | | | |
|--------------------|----|--------------------|---|
| New York..... | 28 | Missouri..... | 1 |
| Massachusetts..... | 23 | Minnesota..... | 1 |
| Pennsylvania..... | 15 | North Dakota..... | 1 |
| Connecticut..... | 12 | Indiana..... | 1 |
| Rhode Island..... | 8 | West Virginia..... | 1 |
| New Jersey..... | 3 | Germany..... | 1 |
| New Hampshire..... | 2 | | |

The human short-comings laid bare in a rapid-fire test of the kind given, can be appreciated only after laboring through these 350 papers covering over 1,400 pages of manuscript. At first the blunders provoke a smile, occasionally an outright laugh. They seem to be mere blunders, the jokes that make human frailties seem funny. But when case piles upon case you begin to fear that the want of information about the government and the utter want of comprehension of our political system may be the rule, not the exception among this much favored class of the rising generation. Under those circumstances one is apt rise from an hour's reading of the papers thinking in a very serious vein. It makes one appreciate the problems of popular education, of securing co-operation for bettering the organization and administration of the government, local, state and national.

A glance at the tabular statements on the preceding pages indicates that the most points were scored on the first question, the one concerning the election of members of Congress. It seems to be due to the general publicity of the matter. A large portion of the information of some seems to have been gleaned from the newspapers, election posters and election returns, or common talk, hence the marks on the five questions tend to vary somewhat in proportion to the relative prominence of the topics in the public discussions. Information picked up in this way bears unmistakable ear-marks, by which it may be easily identified. If it is not supplemented by systematic study it is very apt to degenerate into a kind of brash talk about the government and men in public life that is not exactly wholesome.

An examination of the defective answers will reveal more clearly what these papers contain than averages and percentages. First let us examine a typical case of a very poor paper. It was marked by the instructor, "Recommended for the permanent archives." It is one of a dozen or more found in the lot and is reproduced in full.

PART I.

- I. Age 20.
- II. American.
- III.
- IV. Never studied Civics.
- V. Two years.

PART II.

- I. The members of Congress are chosen by use of the Australian ballot system. The term of office of the members of Congress is four years in most all cases.
- II.
- III. If the Constitution of the United States is to be amended, it has to be brought before the House and voted upon.
- IV. The county government has the following officers:
 - County clerk.
 - County auditor.
 - County attorney.
 - Judge of the court.
 - Constable and sheriff.
 - County treasurer.
- V.

Here are some of the choice bits of information found in various papers in reply to the first question:

"Members of Congress are chosen by a congressional assembly or board. The candidates for Congress are chosen at the caucus or primary election in the spring (in April). The members of the congressional assembly are chosen at this same caucus. After they have been chosen they meet in some county-seat within the congressional district. Here they vote by ballot for the Congressmen, or men who are to represent that district. This is as near as I can remember it from my study of the const. of . . ."

"At the regular election a certain No. of men, one for each district (the size of the dist. depends upon the population) is voted upon and elected. These persons who are thus elected are the ones who elect our senators. They meet at a certain time after election and cast their ballots for a senator, as is required for election."

This idea that our representatives and senators are chosen by a sort of convention or some sort of an electoral college recurred a good many times in these papers, at least eleven instances being recorded in my notes. Several have "congressmen" elected by the state legislature; some distinguish between a "state congress" and a United States congress. Some have senators elected by the state senate, others have them elected by "popular election in some states." A very considerable number seem to have an idea that Congress is one body. Some who knew that there is a senate were hardly better off, for the apportionment of the senators among the several states brought them into difficulties, which several disposed of by allowing one to a state, another contingent would assign senators in proportion to population, finally one of those in this predicament, tottering on the brink of truth, put down "two for each average state."

The ideas in regard to the length of the terms of senators and representatives are equally diverse. They vary from one to six years, for either or both. A very large number think both serve for four years. Several have "senior" and "junior" senators serving for different terms.

As to qualifications the replies are equally original in many cases.

"A man to hold the seat in congress must be over 30 yrs. of age, a citizen of the U. S. able to read and write the English language."

"The predominating qualification of a U. S. senator is to be able to tell funny stories for publication and go to church regularly. He should also contain a smattering of law."

"The political machine puts up a 'safe' man, has him apparently endorsed by the voters, and the various candidates are voted upon by the voters of the congressional district after a lurid cam-

paign of red-fire, beer and promises. They serve for two years, must be male citizens (though constitution says nothing of sex) of at least twenty-five years of age. They get besides little trifling fees from corporations, railroads, etc., \$5,000 from the U. S. treasury."

"They must be 25 yrs. old and have committed no crime of which they have been convicted."

"A senator must be a resident of the state which chooses him, and an upright citizen." (As an afterthought he crossed out all after the comma.) "He must be of sound mind."

The salaries of members of congress was fixed all the way from \$5 per day to \$15,000 per year. One had senators elected by districts and paid for out of district funds.

The second question, the one on the judiciary brought out a less picturesque series of blunders, but many blanks and many hopelessly incorrect ideas. A very considerable proportion of the 350 students did not realize that we have two distinct systems of courts, a system of federal courts and a system of state courts in each commonwealth. They had an idea that our judiciary is one system beginning with the police court and ending with the supreme court in Washington, which they seemed to think of as the fountain head of law and authority and the only national court in the country. Only a mere handful seem to have grasped the idea that our courts stand guard over our constitutions, preventing encroachments and interpreting their meaning in law suits and in law suits only. Now and then a student showed that he knew that the supreme court of his state is the final authority in construing the state law and the state constitution.

The following answers are quoted in full:

"Any case which cannot be settled by the county courts is left to a court or trial before a jury appointed and paid by the government. These juries make it their business to settle disputes which are referred to them and criminal cases."

"The courts of the United States are as follows:

The Supreme Court.

The Circuit Court.

The Criminal Court.

The Juvenile Court.

The lower courts are the last mentioned, and all murders, thefts & any crime of this sort are tried in the criminal court.

The juvenile court. Here all the people below the age of 21 for men and 18 for women are tried; sentences are made to the reformatory, etc.

Circuit Court tries all law suits involving money suits, etc.

Any case may be repealed to the upper court, namely, the Supreme Court. Its decision is final. It can reverse the order or affirm the order of the lower courts."

"Federal courts consist of a judge, jury and prosecuting attorney."

"The federal courts were supplied to meet a demand for accessible courts where small cases could be tried without taking them to the higher or supreme court."

At least two, one a senior, remarked "federal courts is only a name to me." Many others who left a blank, probably found themselves in the same difficulty.

The answers to the third question were generally very wide of the mark. In some universities the majority stated that the constitution can be amended by a bill in congress passed by a vote ranging from a bare majority to four-fifths, the greater number favoring a two-thirds vote. Only a handful gave even an approximation to a correct answer. Nearly all held that the President can veto an amendment but that Congress can overcome it by repassing the amendment by an increased vote of some sort. Not a few thought that the approval of the Supreme Court was needed, others that the voters at the next election must ratify the action of the authorities at Washington or that the states must in some way give their unanimous consent.

A few of these peculiar ideas are shown in the following answers given in full:

"The constitution of the United States may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Senate with the consent of the president, and can be interpreted by being published in the official paper at Washington, and may be placed with the amendments in its proper place."

"The constitution of the United States may be amended by a

three-quarters vote in favor of the amendment of the House and Senate combined. A certain number of signatures of the people attached to an appeal for a vote on a certain topic for amendment may call the attention of congress to the topic in question and require Congress to vote on it. The President may interpret the constitution, and if his interpretation is not suitable, congress may be called upon to give an interpretation."

The description of county government was exceedingly vague, excepting in the papers from some of the middle-western universities. It is quite plain that this difference can be accounted for by the fact that a very large number of the boys had lived in the country and had their attention directed to the subject in the schools. But even in these papers there is room for great improvement in the understanding of rural local government.

Statements like this were frequently the only information offered:

"I know only two county officers, the sheriff and the county clerk, and my ideas of county government are the vaguest." Some frankly said: "Don't know enough to write" or left a blank.

The following attracted my attention among others:

"Since I live in a city composed of four counties, and since the county government is swamped by the city and borough governments, I am, I hope, excusable for not knowing too much thereof. I know that there is a sheriff and county clerk. This am convinced of by campaign posters. Further my knowledge runneth not."

"The government of Worcester county, in . . . , is not very well known to me. I have never studied the government of the county."

"I have always lived in a city, and never walked behind a plough."

A reference to the New England town meeting in a lecture, or in a book must convey a very attenuated notion to a con-

siderable percentage of the young people in our colleges, if this experimental test means anything. A very large number left blanks. Others offered information in this vein:

"I know nothing of them excepting that they often stand as models of (town) government and are even advocated in place of city government."

"The New England plan of township government is not clear to me. I think it is local option, Home rule."

"I never heard of the New England plan of township government. I have only been in the East six weeks."

"Township is only a name to me." One lad of the East declares and another triumphantly assails the knotty problem in this fashion:

"The New England system of governing its townships is the mayor, at its head, board of alderman, City clerk, town clerk, board of public works and education, etc. In short, by boards, and mayor for all different branches of town or city life and business."

Some volunteered very interesting comments like the following:

"Have not studied American History since I was 13 years old, but remember the Boston tea-party."

"No time given to Civics in Prep. School. No time given to American History in the Prep. School, because Roman and Greek History were required for College, and I did not have time to take American History offered in preparation for , excellent tho it was."

"I have never studied the constitution, but remember the preamble that all men are free and equal, and are considered innocent until judged guilty, and all men have rights of trial by jury."

"I had Civics and American History in the lower schools, a couple of years each, but it was a long time ago and never took any thorough course in either."

"I spent the last year of my grammar school in studying the government of the U. S. This was the only time the U. S. government was taught me. For I did not have any course in the high school at all. What I do know about the government I have learned through reading, when I had any spare time."

"I did not take American History in my course, as I did not have time to get it in, and I am grossly ignorant on American Government."

"Took American History one year in the 8th grade. Never took Civics; it was not taught at that time in the High School except as a post-graduate subject, and as a result I know very little of the following questions, not enough to write upon. I am sorry to say and also surprised to say."

"American Government five months in the High School. That was in my last term senior year, and it was elective. If enough agreed to take it, why the class had it."

"Notwithstanding the fact that I had some Civics in connection with a course in American History, I can remember practically none of it. Time given to American History about 8 months."

"I have never studied Civics, and these few, simple questions of yours have startled me on learning that I know so little or nothing about the United States government."

It is only fair to emphasize the fact that this test was given to that portion of our college students who had not yet taken college courses in Political Science or who did not intend to take such courses. The papers written by a small number who did take work along this line were of a very different order. Indeed the five best papers in all the colleges were fair, in some they were exceedingly good. Boys of 19 and 20 in some cases showed an insight into our governmental system, a maturity of judgment, and a political good sense that contrasts very strongly with the vague, inaccurate and often flippant responses of others several years older.

It is to be hoped that the ranks of our legislators, judges, and other public officers will in the future be recruited from that large and growing class of young men who are making a special study of Economics, Politics, Sociology and History in our Universities. It is impossible to believe that our political training by bill-boards, newspaper head-lines and stump speeches makes for a well-informed, enlightened, well-poised citizenship or furnishes a good foundation for a career in law, journalism or the government service. That there

has been a phenomenal growth in the last ten or fifteen years in the field of the social sciences, in the way of scientific research and instruction, no one can have failed to notice, who is at all familiar with recent advances in our universities. Not all of our great universities have fallen into line in promoting this work, a few permitting themselves to be outstripped by the younger, state-fostered institutions which are closer to the people. But on the whole the facilities offered today for fitting a young man systematically and thoroughly for a public career are immeasurably superior to anything an American university could have offered 25 years ago, or in most cases even 15 years ago. This impetus given to researches in Economics, Administration, Legislation, Political Parties and social conditions generally, has not been without its effect on the public service. Some of the most important reforms undertaken in recent years were made possible through the carefully trained men turned out by the universities. The number of these men holding bachelor's and doctor's degrees in some of the departments of the federal service is very considerable already, and the demand for trained men is sure to increase.

There is every reason to think that the day is not far distant when the training with which our attorneys, judges and administrative officers enter their careers will be as much superior to the training of those now entering those pursuits, as the training with which a chemist or an engineer who now enters upon his career is superior to that of his predecessor of 25 years ago. It is to be feared, however, that in most cases those who enter our colleges of law bring to the strictly technical training there usually given, no better equipment than that of the students who took this experimental test. Indeed I venture a guess that it is on the whole poorer. Does this defective training of our young men in the social sciences help to account for the fact that the name of "statesman" has almost gone out of use except as a term of derision? Does it account for the inconspicuous part taken by college men in American politics in the past?

Before the training of men for the legal profession, for jour-

nalism and the public service can be put on a sound basis, however, the amount and the grade of work on American History and American Government in the secondary schools must be vastly improved. Educators may differ as to what constitutes an education or what is the best equipment with which to send a young man out into the world to do his life work, but I submit that there are three essentials we cannot afford to neglect. The first is the command of the English language, the ability to speak and write English with a reasonable degree of accuracy and fluency. This accomplishment has been made a definite requirement in some of our universities. The requirement is stated in the rules and is systematically enforced. A special examination is given each year at Minnesota and all those who fall below 75 per cent are required to take special work in English before they can present themselves for a University degree. There can be no denying the essential justice of such a requirement nor its wholesome stimulating effect upon the entire school system where it prevails.

Has not the time come when we should add a second and a third requirement? They are, a reasonable acquaintance with our country's history and a fair understanding of our country's government. If it be true that the best claim that our schools have upon support from the public treasury is that they make for better citizenship, then I cannot understand how we can much longer avoid making the understanding of our government and our national history an essential requirement for graduation, at least in those states where the entire educational system, from the primary to the University, is maintained by public agency. Should such a step be taken and every candidate for a college degree be required to have attained a certain proficiency in American Government and American History, that work would receive a decided impetus throughout all the schools and would have a salutary effect on our citizenship. Its influence would soon be diffused among a great number by the teachers who go out from our doors in large numbers every year. The elements of American Government and American History should be made

college entrance requirements, so that no young American citizen attending a college can hereafter say:

“I have never studied Civics, and these few simple questions of yours have startled me on learning that I know so little or nothing about the United States government.”